TASK ORDER

Design of the Impact Evaluation for the Ticket to Work Program

A. Purpose of Policy Evaluation Contract

The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA) was signed into law in December 1999. The Ticket to Work Program within TWWIIA provides a new approach for assisting beneficiaries with disabilities return to gainful employment. The program establishes a network of employment service providers (Employment Networks—ENs) who receive payments based on successful employment outcomes rather than services provided. SSA will contract with a Program Manager (PM) to assist in the implementation of the program and recruitment and management of the ENs. ENs who successfully return disabled beneficiaries to work at levels that cause benefits to cease can receive up to 40 percent of the program benefits that would otherwise go to the beneficiary. ENs can receive such payments for months in which the beneficiary remains off of SSA benefits due to work. The maximum number of these "successful outcome" payments is 60. ENs may also receive milestone payments prior to a beneficiary's exit from the rolls, once success toward employment has been demonstrated. The total payments under outcomes plus milestones will be less than under outcomes only.

The Ticket to Work program will begin implementation in January of 2001. The primary evaluation objective is to determine the net impact of this initiative as compared to the results that would occur under the current system. TWWIIA also requires the evaluation of several specific aspects of the program and outcomes. The evaluation will examine the total and net costs of the program, the individual and service provision characteristics affecting return-to-work, the employment outcomes for participants, the characteristics of service providers and provider networks, the appeal of the program among the eligible population, and the satisfaction of participants with the program in general. The evaluation will also provide feedback to policymakers through periodic reports detailing data collection, findings and recommendations for program modifications.

Background:

Currently, few individuals leave the SSDI or SSI rolls due to a "work recovery," or the ability to earn wages above the "substantial gainful activity" level (currently $700 per month) despite continued impairment. Data from 1998 indicate that of the 4.70 million disabled workers receiving DI benefits, only 8.7 percent had their benefits discontinued. Of those discontinued DI beneficiaries, 87.1 percent died or converted to another Social Security benefit (i.e., retirement or survivors' benefits) and 12.3 percent medically recovered.[1] Thus, only a small fraction of the DI beneficiary population leaves the benefit rolls as a result of return to work without a medical recovery, and the situation for SSI is no better.

Over the years, SSA has invested in rehabilitation services for beneficiaries. The cost for these services in 1998 was $51 million.[2] These services are not provided directly through SSA, however, but rather flow through the state vocational rehabilitation (VR) program administered by the Department of Education. Despite these expenditures, vocational rehabilitation successes for individuals receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) have been very limited. Part of the difficulty the vocational rehabilitation program has had in serving SSA beneficiaries has resulted from the historically different purposes of the two programs. Social Security historically has been a program to serve individuals who were near retirement and found themselves unable to work, while the VR program has been targeted more toward working age disabled (primarily injured) adults who needed assistance to enter or re-enter the workforce. The different perspectives and attitudes towards the population of individuals has led to disjointed and sometimes contradictory programs. In addition, the programs are funded in very different ways with different measures of accountability.

Due to the limited success of the VR system for SSA beneficiaries, SSA has attempted to work with the private sector to improve outcomes. In March of 1994, SSA published regulations allowing the use of "alternate participant" providers of rehabilitation services. As of January 2000, 450 providers were under contract with

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[1] Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998), p. 157 and Table 6.F2 p. 283.
[2] *Annual Statistical Supplement*, Table 4.A4, p. 162.

SSA to serve DI or SSI beneficiaries who had been turned down for services by VR after an SSA referral. Despite the significant number of providers that enrolled in the program, only a handful of beneficiaries have received services through the AP program.

Under both the VR and AP programs, SSA reimburses providers for the reasonable and necessary costs of the services they provide to disability beneficiaries who return to work. The monthly earnings for such individuals must exceed substantial gainful activity (SGA) for nine of 12 months before reimbursement is due. The problem under this system is that payments are based on the services provided and attainment of a short-term employment outcome. This provides an incentive structure that is potentially inefficient in that it places undue emphasis on VR service activity rather than on the long-term employment outcomes.

Given this backdrop, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA) represents one of the most significant changes in SSA disability policy in the last 20 years. The new program is expected to allow access to vocational services for a much larger pool of disabled beneficiaries than has occurred under the state vocational rehabilitation program. In addition to the work services, TWWIIA extends by four and one-half years beyond the current limit Part A premium-free Medicare coverage to SSDI beneficiaries who return to work. For SSI beneficiaries, the Law allows states to adopt Medicaid waivers to extend coverage to those with earnings that would make them otherwise ineligible. Both of the medical care provisions are designed to boost the success of the program by removing the healthcare coverage barriers that are often cited as impediments to gainful employment for beneficiaries. The legislation also allows beneficiaries, whose benefits have ended because of earnings from work, five years to request reinstatement without filing a new application.

The Contractor awarded under this ORES Task Order will design a comprehensive evaluation of the net outcomes produced by the Ticket to Work program contained in the TWWIIA. This evaluation design will be implemented under a separate ORES contract to be competitively bid in spring of 2001. The design Contractor will be eligible to bid on the implementation contract only if they agree to meet SSA's related open reporting requirements under the design contract (see **Section F** below). The term of this Task Order contract will be 18 months.

C. Statement of Work

C.1 Overview

Information on the effectiveness of the Ticket to Work program will be obtained through the development and implementation of a comprehensive evaluation design. The design will include data assessment, supplemental survey development, identification of appropriate comparison groups, development of appropriate net outcome and process evaluation protocols, and technical assistance to the implementation contractor. The Contractor will consult with a technical evaluation support group and brief the TWWIIA Advisory Panel at critical points in the design process. The implementation of the evaluation designed under this contract will occur under a separate contract.

Data for the evaluation will be available from current SSA administrative files (MBR, SSR, 831 and SER), new SSA Ticket implementation files, and the Ticket Program Manager (**see Attachments)**. The Contractor will analyze the utility of these files for creating files for the evaluation analysis. Because not all of the data that will be needed to fully evaluate the Ticket program will be included in these files, the Contractor will also design a set of surveys to supplement these SSA and PM sources. These surveys will likely cover items such as the vocational services received and characteristics of jobs obtained among Ticket and non-Ticket participants. The surveys would also cover issues of motivation, attitudes, and satisfaction with the program among participants and eligible nonparticipants. For purposes of comparison, survey data will also need to be collected on a sample of individuals who are ineligible for Ticket services. Such ineligibles would include both individuals in states not yet covered by the program and SSA disabled beneficiaries in Ticket eligible states who are ineligible for Ticket services. A distinct participation survey will likely focus specifically on beneficiary decisions to participate in the Ticket program and similar vocational rehabilitation services for beneficiaries who are not Ticket participants. Each survey is expected to be narrow in design, focusing only on the additional information needed to answer the relevant legislative evaluation questions. Since the surveys will be administered to subsamples of participants and nonparticipants, the Contractor will be required to develop an appropriate sample design. The Contractor will also develop draft OMB clearance packages to expedite the implementation of the surveys and the sample design.

The Ticket to Work program will be rolled out nationally in three phases over three years. The rollout will begin with 10-13 states in January of 2001. The second phase will involve a similar number of additional states in 2002 and all remaining states will be added in 2003. The group of states selected for the first round of the rollout are expected to be representative of the nation as a whole across characteristics that would be expected to affect the success of the Ticket to Work program.[3] One likely comparison group for the net outcome evaluation will therefore be individuals in states in the third phase of the rollout. The evaluation design Contractor will need to identify appropriate strategies for selecting appropriate comparison groups under this challenging implementation structure. It is expected that the comparison group design will utilize statistical methods, such as propensity scoring, on SSA and other available data to identify individuals that are most comparable to Ticket participants. It is further expected that the implementation contractor may use the participation survey (identified above) of both the Ticket sample and potential comparison group members to refine appropriate comparison groups. Offerors will be expected to include at least three alternative comparison group designs in their proposals. Alternatives might include comparison groups defined within Ticket eligible states, and time-series designs (including difference in differences).

The overall goal of the contract is to develop an evaluation analysis plan for assessing the impact of the Ticket program relative to the outcomes that would have occurred in its absence. The evaluation shall generally be designed to provide an independent assessment of the effectiveness of the Ticket to Work program including net impacts on:

- the level of SSA benefits received by beneficiaries
- work participation by SSA beneficiaries
- the level of earnings by beneficiaries
- the extent to which beneficiaries leave the SSA benefit roles due to work
- the duration of SSA benefits received by beneficiaries

The evaluation shall also be designed to meet the evaluation requirements as specified under Sec.101.(c)(4) of the TWWIIA legislation titled "ONGOING EVALUATION OF PROGRAM." In general this section requires the evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the Ticket to Work on work outcomes for beneficiaries receiving tickets and the cost-effectiveness of the program. In the section of the Act titled "SPECIFIC MATTERS TO BE ADDRESS," the legislation states that the evaluation:

> …shall address (but is not limited to)--
> (I) the annual cost (including net cost) of the Program and the annual cost (including net cost) that would have been incurred in the absence of the Program;
> (II) the determinants of return to work, including the characteristics of beneficiaries in receipt of tickets under the Program;
> (III) the types of employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, and other support services furnished to beneficiaries in receipt of tickets under the Program who return to work and to those who do not return to work;
> (IV) the duration of employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, and other support services furnished to beneficiaries in receipt of tickets under the Program who return to work and the duration of such services furnished to those who do not return to work and the cost to employment networks of furnishing such services;
> (V) the employment outcomes, including wages, occupations, benefits, and hours worked, of beneficiaries who return to work after receiving tickets under the Program and those who return to work without receiving such tickets;
> (VI) the characteristics of individuals in possession of tickets under the Program who are not accepted for services and, to the extent reasonably determinable, the reasons for which such beneficiaries were not accepted for services;
> (VII) the characteristics of providers whose services are provided within an employment network under the Program;
> (VIII) the extent (if any) to which employment networks display a greater willingness to provide services to beneficiaries with a range of disabilities;

[3] The set of states chosen will consider the following:
1. National representation (of the group) across 12 objective characteristics that would be expected to affect the success of the Ticket to Work legislation. These factors included state characteristics such as the percentage use of public transportation to get to work, the percent of disabled SSI recipients who are working, the state unemployment rate and the percent of population in metropolitan areas;
2. Existence of Medicaid buy-in waivers under section 4733 of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (at least four but no more than six such states);
3. Match quality with a similar set of states to be included in the Ticket to Work in the third round of the national rollout; and
4. Practical SSA implementation concerns including an SSA beneficiary population that is less than 30% of the total and inclusion of all of SSA's regions.

(IX) the characteristics (including employment outcomes) of those beneficiaries who receive services under the outcome payment system and of those beneficiaries who receive services under the outcome-milestone payment system;
(X) measures of satisfaction among beneficiaries in receipt of tickets under the Program; and
(XI) reasons for (including comments solicited from beneficiaries regarding) their choice not to use their tickets or their inability to return to work despite the use of their tickets.
[The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act, Sec.101.(c)(4)(C)(ii).]

To address these issues, there will be two components to the actual evaluation design: the process evaluation and the impact evaluation. The process evaluation design will address Ticket implementation activities by SSA, the Program Manager and the employment networks established under the Law. The design Contractor will develop the overall process evaluation and will implement its earliest phases prior to handing it off to the evaluation implementation contractor. The second component of the evaluation will address the impact of the Ticket program on beneficiaries and will include three separate parts. The first part will design an evaluation to examine those net outcomes that can be addressed using SSA administrative files and the new Ticket Program Manager and SSA Ticket implementation files for ***all*** SSA disabled beneficiaries not residing in foreign countries. The second part to the impact evaluation design will address participation and the detailed vocational services and employment outcomes for those SSA disabled beneficiaries included in the surveys created under this design contract. The final part to the impact evaluation design will assess the qualitative outcomes from the consumer satisfaction survey.

A Technical Evaluation Support Group (TESG) will meet three times during the course of this contract to review and technically assess key design elements. The TESG will be composed of 5 academic technical experts, 3 nonacademic, non-governmental technical experts and 3 government experts from SSA and other agencies, as well as others invited by the government to attend specific meetings. The government reserves the right to make final choices for TESG membership. As part of the project start-up activities, the Contractor shall formally establish the TESG from these ranked lists. In forming the Technical Evaluation Support Group (TESG) as part of Task 1, the Contractor will work closely with SSA's Task Manager.

The Ticket to Work legislation also requires consultation with the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Advisory Panel. The Contractor shall provide briefings to the Advisory Panel at appropriate points following each the of the three TESG meetings, and subject to the Panel's schedule. In addition, 12 copies of all final reports under this contract shall be sent directly to the Advisory Panel.

The design Contractor will also be required to provide technical assistance to the implementation contractor once that contract is awarded next spring. Activities of the two contracts will have substantial overlap.

C.2 Description of Tasks and Subtasks under the Task Order

A complete list of deliverables and due dates corresponding to each task/subtask described below is provided in Section D (Schedule and Deliverables). Monthly Contractor progress reports shall begin 11/30/00.

The Contractor shall submit to the Task Manager one electronic copy of all required data deliverables. All other deliverables corresponding to the following tasks and subtasks are to be submitted in both hard copy and electronic formats. The Contractor shall submit to the Task Manager one hard copy and one electronic copy of each required progress report, memo, and letter style report. Unless otherwise indicated in Section D, the Contractor shall submit to the Task Manager four hard copies, one camera-ready copy and one electronic copy of all other deliverables. All final versions of reports (excluding letter style reports) shall include a table of contents, a table of acronyms and an executive summary.

SSA will review all reports for writing style and technical quality. All reports must conform to the Chicago Manual of Style for technical writing. SSA will return all reports submitted by the Contractor that do not conform to this standard for revision, and will not assess the technical quality of the report until such revisions are complete. The Contractor will have a once-per-deliverable seven-day grace period to correct all problems in writing style and bring the report into compliance with the Chicago Manual of Style for technical writing. Reports requiring revision for writing style that are revised and delivered after the seven-day grace period will be considered late under the associated deliverable. All final deliverables are due within three weeks of the Contractor's receipt of technical comments by the Task Manager, unless otherwise stated in Section D, below.

1 Project Start-Up

At the time of award, SSA will update the TO Contractor on SSA and Ticket Program Manager datasets and the status of the data systems. SSA will also update the TO Contractor on any changes in the Ticket to Work implementation designs and the current status of that implementation. The government will also provide the Contractor with ranked lists of academic, survey, and government experts for the TESG. The government's list may include interested experts that were not part of the Contractor's proposal. As part of the project start-up activities, the Contractor shall formally establish the TESG from these ranked lists. In the event participation in the TESG is declined by a nominee from the ranked list, the Contractor shall immediately notify the SSA Task Manager and then proceed to contact the next ranked name on the list. The Contractor shall pay the necessary honoraria and travel expenses for the non-government TESG members (see **Section F**, **Instructions to Offerors**).

2 Project Start-Up Activities

By the date indicated in Section D, below, the TO Contractor shall meet with the SSA Task Manager and other ORES staff at the ORES Washington, DC offices to discuss interaction with SSA. Topics will include the electronic format of SSA and Ticket Program Manager data files to be provided to the Contractor by SSA. Any requests for additional information on SSA administrative files should also be discussed at this time. The TO Contractor should understand and be prepared to discuss questions regarding the Ticket to Work program and the data being collected by the Ticket Program Manager. Final plans for forming the Technical Evaluation Support Group also will be made at this meeting.

The TO Contractor shall write a letter style summary of the meeting, including descriptions of how key issues were resolved within the timeframe indicated in Section D, below.

3 Prepare A Public Version of the Technical Proposal and TESG #1

3.1 Prepare A Public Version of the Technical Proposal

The Contractor shall produce a public version of their technical proposal for distribution to members of the Technical Evaluation Support Group, SSA staff, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Advisory Panel, potential bidders for the Ticket to Work evaluation implementation contract, and other parties interested in the design of the Ticket to Work evaluation design. This Public Version of the Technical Proposal shall include all pertinent design aspects of the Contractor's proposal updated to include the resolution of all issues raise through SSA's questions and requests for clarification in response to the Contractor's proposal. This report shall be delivered to the SSA Task Manager for approval by the date indicated in Section D, below.

3.2 The Initial TESG Meeting

The Contractor, in consultation with the SSA Task Manager, shall schedule a meeting of the TESG at ORES' Washington, DC offices. The Contractor shall make the necessary travel arrangements for all non-governmental out-of-town TESG members who do attend. The Contractor shall directly mail the approved Public Version of the Technical Proposal to all members (academic and non-academic experts, and government members) of the TESG and the TWWIIA Advisory Panel. This proposal shall form the basis of discussion for the TESG meeting. The purpose of this meeting will be to solicit ideas, suggestions, recommendations, and advice from the expert panel members regarding alternative data sources, comparison groups and the proposed net outcomes evaluation designs

After the meeting, the Contractor shall write a letter style summary of the meeting, indicating ways in which key suggestions and recommendations shall be incorporated into the evaluation design. The meeting summary shall be sent to the Task Order manager by the date indicated in Section D, below. The Contractor shall provide a final version of the meeting summary following receipt of comments on the summary within the timeframe indicated in Section D, below.

4 Analysis of the Utility of Data from SSA Administrative Files and the Ticket to Work Process

An important function under evaluation design contract will be the assessment of general SSA administrative files and the new files associated with the Ticket to Work process. This assessment will focus on the usefulness of this data in creating the evaluation analysis files for the participant and comparison groups. The purpose of this task is to determine which data elements from the various SSA and program manager sources will be available and useful in answering the evaluation questions under the Contractor's proposed design. In conducting this analysis, the Contractor will review available documentation and existing reports on the use of SSA data in evaluating work activity, and will discuss the potential utility of data items for the evaluation with knowledgeable SSA staff, but the Contractor will not analyze actual data. At the conclusion of this process the Contractor shall identify the data sources that will need to be tapped and the data elements to be used from each of those sources for the impact evaluation in Task 8. This process will also identify gaps in the data that will need to be filled through the supplemental surveys discussed in Task 5 below.

4.1 <u>Evaluate Existing Reports on the Use of SSA Data in Developing Analysis Files</u>

In implementing the Ticket program, SSA will be creating a number of new data sets to support tracking of Ticket use, employment and benefit outcomes, and payments to participating Ticket networks. In addition to the data collected by SSA, additional data will be collected by the SSA Ticket Program Manager. This data will focus more on EN management, but will also include data complementary to that included in the new SSA Ticket files. The current draft of these new data sets are attached.

While the Tickets data is expected to include most of the information on participants needed for the design of the Tickets evaluation, it will not have sufficient information on eligible and ineligible nonparticipants. Information on these groups, and some supplementary information on Ticket participants will need to be obtained from existing SSA administrative files. These existing SSA administrative files will include the Master Beneficiary Record (MBR), Supplemental Security Record (SSR), Numident, Summary Earnings Record (SER), and National Disability Determination Service (831) data files (see **Attachments**).

SSA has in the last few years conducted a number of projects that provide valuable insight into the utility of SSA data in evaluating return-to-work activities among SSA beneficiaries. The Project Network evaluation included a sophisticated analysis of SSA data (conducted by Fu associates, 1997, 1998, attached), and provides an excellent base for determining which data items could be expected to be of use in the current evaluation design.[4] In addition, SSA has recently concluded a contract with RAND to develop a users manual for SSA administrative data. The documentation that resulted from this project provides valuable information on the layout, content and utility of most SSA administrative data elements that would be of interest to this evaluation design contract. Copies of the RAND reports are attached.

Finally, under an existing SSA contract, Mathematica Policy Research is currently analyzing SSA administrative data for use in the SSA State Partnership Initiative demonstrations. This report, when completed, will include a detailed assessment of SSA administrative files including descriptive statistics of all data elements to be used in the analysis. Since this project will also use SSA data to evaluate the impact of various return-to-work programs, the evaluation design and data issues are very similar to those in the Ticket evaluation. This report is thus expected to provide the basis of the data element assessment under this Ticket to Work evaluation design contract. This report is expected to be completed in October of 2000, and will be made available to the Contractor under the project start-up. A description of the required contents of this report is attached (see **Attachment 4, "Requirements of the MPR administrative analysis file development contract**" and **Section F, Instructions to Offerors**).

After reviewing the most recent documentation on pre-existing SSA administrative files and the new data files under the Ticket program (under the start up activities above), the Contractor shall draft a letter style report specifying the data elements under consideration for the project, and any remaining questions the Contractor has regarding the data. The report shall be delivered to the Task Manager by the date indicated in Section D, below.

4.2 <u>Meet with Ticket Program Manager and SSA staff in Baltimore to discuss data usage and logistics</u>

Following the review of the SSA documentation and literature, the Contractor will schedule and attend a meeting with the Ticket Program Manager and SSA staff at SSA's <u>Baltimore</u> offices. This meeting will occur within the timeframe indicated in Section D, below. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss the layout of SSA and Ticket Program Manager data sets and resolve questions regarding the content (or

[4] See "The Development of the Project NetWork Administrative Records Database for Policy Evaluation," Social Security Bulletin, Vol. 62, No.2, 1999

expected content) of the data files, and discuss availability and access that the implementation contractor can expect to this data.

Following this meeting the Contractor shall submit a summary memo on the issues discussed and decisions reached by the date indicated in Section D, below.

4.3 Report on the Assessment of SSA Administrative Files and the Ticket to Work Process

The TO Contractor shall provide a detailed report on the results of their evaluation of SSA Administrative and the Tickets process data. Elements to be covered shall include:

- Proposed data files to be used in the Tickets evaluation;
- The proposed data elements from each file for the Ticket evaluation, and keys to be used in merging the files;
- A discussion of the temporal data matching issues to assure that the data from disparate files are properly aligned;
- The protocols to be followed in accessing the SSA and PM files;
- An assessment of the quality of the data to be used, and identification of elements that need to be tested;
- An assessment of the data elements that will be needed in the Tickets evaluation that are not contained in the existing SSA Administrative and the Tickets process data sources that will need to be collected through supplemental surveys (see Task 5 below).

A draft of this report shall be delivered to the SSA Task Manager for comment by the date indicated in Section D, below. Following receipt of comments by the Task Manager, the TO Contractor shall provide the final version of this report within the timeframe indicated in Section D, below.

5 Develop the Supplemental Surveys and Sample Design

While data from SSA administrative and Ticket process files will be extensive, information on topics and populations not included in these data will need to be collected to meet the net outcome evaluation needs and the requirements evaluation of the TWWIIA legislation. Supplemental topics will include participant and nonparticipant attitudes toward the Ticket program, details on services obtained under the Ticket and traditional VR programs, and details on job characteristics (e.g., type of work and benefits provided). Other populations of interest include individuals in Ticket eligible states who are ineligible for the Ticket program, and individuals in states not yet covered by the Ticket program. To fulfil these supplemental data needs, the Contractor shall develop a sample design and a set of surveys to be fielded under the evaluation implementation contract. Each survey will be narrow in design, focusing only on the additional information needed to answer relevant questions required of the evaluation. Each survey is expected to be 20-30 minutes in length.

5.1 Design Draft Supplemental Surveys

The evaluation of the Ticket program will is expected to require 4 separate surveys to capture information that will be unavailable through existing sources. These survey topic areas are as follows:

1. ***Participation Survey:*** covers the human capital, disability, demographic, economic, and motivational characteristics of beneficiaries that drive the decision to participate in vocational rehabilitation services
2. ***Consumer Satisfaction Survey:*** covers consumer satisfaction with the Tickets program
3. ***Employment Services Survey:*** covers Ticket and other vocational services received
4. ***Outcomes Data Survey:*** covers the details of work and other outcomes

The Contractor shall determine whether these four survey topics will meet the needs of the impact evaluation and answer those questions identified in the TWWIIA legislation, and shall identify additional or alternative survey topics as necessary. The Contractor shall then develop the necessary surveys. Both English and Spanish language versions shall be developed for each survey developed under this contract. Each survey will be narrow in design, focusing only on the additional information needed, over what is available through SSA administrative and Ticket implementation sources. The interview length for each survey is expected to average 20-30 minutes. The Contractor shall draft each of these survey instruments, utilizing input from the TESG under Task 3.2 and the government regarding survey content.

The consumer satisfaction survey will likely include a single administration to Ticket participants (without follow-up). The Contractor shall assess whether the survey should be timed to include individuals who are engaged, or who have recently completed relative activities (such as vocational services or work).

The employment services survey will likely also be designed for a single administration (without follow-up) to Ticket participants. This survey could also be timed to include individuals who are engaged in, or who have recently completed, relevant activities (such as vocational services or work). The primary goal of this survey will be to assess the type and amount of services being provided.

The participation survey is expected to be used to analyze participation in the Ticket to Work directly. If the Contractor also plans to use the participation survey to assist in the development of the comparison groups (by identifying individuals on non-Ticket areas who are most like Ticket participants), the Contractor will need to incorporate this dual purpose in the survey design. The participation survey will likely be designed for a single administration to Ticket eligibles (without follow-up). If the survey is to support the selection of comparison group members, the design will need to be adjusted to be applicable to ineligibles from potential comparison groups (such as alternate wording in the survey depending on whether Tickets or VR applies).

The outcomes data survey is expected to be administered as an initial impact survey with at least one follow-up administration approximately one to two years after the initial impact survey. Both the initial impact survey and the follow-up survey would focus on vocational services and employment experience since the implementation of the Ticket program (assuming the participation survey gathered the baseline demographic, employment and human capital background information). The follow-up survey may be expanded or modified by the implementation contractor to address topical issues at the time it is administered, so flexibility would need to be part of the survey design.

Survey designs shall utilize and build upon existing surveys wherever possible to maximize comparability, minimize duplication of effort, and utilize questions that have been previously tested. Possible donor survey instruments that could be used as models for the evaluation surveys (including Project Network and the State Partnership Initiative surveys) are attached.

It is expected that data resulting from these surveys would be matched to SSA administrative data to examine questions such as the differences in services, satisfaction or outcomes across disability types and geographic areas. While such matching will not be conducted under the design contract, the Contractor will need to consider such uses in designing the surveys.

The survey instruments shall be developed to the point that they are ready to be delivered to the pretest sample (Task 5.3.2). The various topic areas of the draft survey instruments shall be clearly delineated to facilitate the review process. The Contractor shall deliver a survey draft report to the Task Manager by the date specified in Section D, below. The survey draft report shall include the draft instruments plus full discussions of the relevant literature, identification of all donor survey questions that were used, the target populations for each survey, and research objectives and topical modules covered for each survey.

5.2 <u>Develop the Ticket Group and Comparison Group Samples</u>

The sample design shall be developed under this contract, but will be implemented under a separate implementation contract. The design phase will occur during the early implementation of the Tickets before much of the data that will be necessary to test the sample design will be available. The purpose of this phase is to sufficiently develop the design to guide the survey development and satisfy the requirements of the OMB survey clearance package. This initial phase is discussed here under Task 5.2. Once sufficient data is available from the Ticket implementation, the sample design will be tested and the initial sample drawn by the implementation contractor. The design Contractor shall provide technical assistance to the implementation contractor in implementing the design as described under Task 9.

Since the Ticket to Work program will be rolled out nationally in three phases over three years beginning in January of 2001, identification of appropriate Ticket (treatment) and comparison group samples for the evaluation will present numerous challenges. Ticket group samples will need to be selected to show the full array of outcomes of the Ticket process, while the comparison group sample will need to be closely matched to provide appropriate net estimates of program impacts. The Ticket group sample will need to be drawn from participants and nonparticipants who are eligible for Ticket services. The comparison group sample will be drawn from Ticket ineligible individuals.

It is expected that samples will need to be drawn from Ticket eligible participants and non-participants, and Ticket ineligibles who do, and do not, obtain similar vocational services. The Contractor shall determine the appropriate samples that will need to be included for the various surveys and how they will be identified. One possibility is that the consumer satisfaction and employment services surveys would be administered to an appropriate sample of ***Ticket participants***. The participation survey might then be administered to an appropriate sample of ***Ticket eligibles***. If the survey is to support the selection of comparison group members, it would also be administered to ***Ticket ineligibles in potential comparison groups***. Similarly, the outcomes data survey could be administered to an appropriate sample of Ticket participants and ***selected individuals from the potential comparison groups*** (selected to closely match Ticket participants).

Respondent burden will need to be considered in determining the sample for each survey. Inclusion of individuals in multiple surveys allows the evaluation to analyze relationships across the responses of the various surveys, but also increases respondent burden. The Contractor will need to consider whether having respondents included in multiple surveys provides clear advantages to the evaluation.

It is also possible that the survey topics suggested above could be combined to cover multiple topics for some or all sample members. The initial employment outcomes survey, for example, could be given as a special module of the participation survey for a subset of Ticket participants. Timing issues would need to be carefully considered, however, since the data from one survey (e.g., the participation survey) may need to be analyzed prior to selection of respondents for another survey (e.g., the employment outcomes survey). Such timing issues will also need to be considered if the participation survey is to support the selection of comparison group members (e.g., using the participation survey to identify and select individuals in potential comparison groups that are most like Ticket participants).

5.2.1 Develop the Ticket Group Design

Within Ticket eligible and ineligible populations, various subpopulations will need to be covered in order to meet the evaluation needs and the requirements under the Ticket Legislation. Consequently, the samples will likely need to be stratified to obtain statistically significant coverage of such subpopulations so that impact comparisons can be made.

Ticket eligibles include:
1. Eligible participants
2. Eligible nonparticipants who are not interested in participation
3. Eligible individuals who are interested in participation, but have been denied services

Ticket Participants include:

1. Eligible participants under the milestones plus outcomes payment option who attain work
2. Eligible participants under the milestones plus outcomes payment option who do *not* attain work
3. Eligible participants under the outcomes only payment option who attain work
4. Eligible participants under the outcomes only payment option who do not attain work

Other subgroups may also be necessary to facilitate a quality analysis of the net impact of the Ticket program. Stratification of the groups by characteristics such as age, gender, and type of disability will also likely be necessary to appropriately evaluate the Ticket program. The sample design will thus need to address sample sizes, stratification, and national representation.

The Contractor shall consult frequently with SSA's Task Manager during the development process. Based on this consultation, input from the TESG, and information produced from Ticket program implementation activities and the other tasks in this design contract, the Contractor shall develop and make modifications, as necessary, to the ticket sample design. Progress on the sample design development shall be included in the monthly reports to the Task Manager.

5.2.2 Develop the Comparison Group Design

Within the potential comparison groups, various subpopulations will also need to be considered in order to meet the evaluation requirements and the requirements specified under the Ticket Legislation.

The Comparison group will potentially include (but is not necessarily limited to):
1. Ticket ineligible beneficiaries in Ticket eligible states
2. Beneficiaries in Ticket ineligible states who are likely to participate when Ticket eligible
3. Beneficiaries in Ticket ineligible states who are not likely to participate when Ticket eligible
4. Beneficiaries in Ticket ineligible states who participate in traditional VR services

One potential source for the comparison sample will be states in the third phase of the rollout. In addition to the typical comparison group matching difficulties, such groups will present at least three important problems. First, due to the rollout design, the potential comparison period is only about three years before the comparison states are included in the Ticket program. Consequently, the full impact of differential outcomes may not be identified before the comparison group is "contaminated" by the program. Next, there are potential ongoing contamination problems given the inevitable rollout of the Ticket program in the comparison states. The fact that beneficiaries know that the Ticket program is coming could cause them to delay obtaining vocational services and work, if they believe they will be better served under the Ticket program when it arrives. Finally, because the third round states are not yet part of the Ticket program, the comparatively rich data on Ticket participants will not be available for the comparison group. The survey data that will be collected will reduce this data discrepancy, but will not be able to eliminate it completely.

Drawing comparison groups from SSA beneficiaries who are participants in traditional vocational rehabilitation services in non-Ticket areas presents opportunities, but raises other problems. Such individuals are likely to match well with Ticket participants on unmeasurable qualities such as drive and determination. However, the Ticket program is designed to reach a larger population than traditional SSA/VR clients, and still allows Ticket holders to opt for traditional VR services. This implies that SSA/VR clients in non-Ticket areas provide only a partial match to Ticket participants. VR participants in Ticket ineligible states may also be difficult to identify. Currently, SSA/VR cases are only identified retrospectively when VR requests payment for a successful rehabilitation. Cases that have not reached nine months of successful employment, or fail, are not identified in SSA records. SSA will track VR participation for Ticket eligibles in Ticket states, but it is uncertain whether similar data will be available in Ticket ineligible states. If such individuals are to form a group for comparison, a viable means for identifying VR clients in these states (outside of SSA data systems) will likely be necessary.

Other designs may be possible depending on how Tickets are distributed. Although the rollout process has not been finalized, one possibility is that the distribution of Tickets within the initial phase-in Ticket states will be staged. Beginning in January 2001, SSA may send Tickets each month to all newly eligible disabled individuals in the selected first round states who had been awarded in the previous month. Beginning in February 2001, SSA would send Tickets to those newly awarded in January 2001 plus all existing beneficiaries in the first round states with a pre-selected terminal digit of their Social Security Number (e.g., all beneficiaries whose SSN ends with 0). Succeeding months would then continue this protocol. Alternatively, the distribution rate could increase in subsequent months by including multiple terminal digits, or decrease by skipping months, depending on the PM's productivity and the number of employment networks (ENs) recruited. Eligible beneficiaries in the first-round states who request a Ticket during this period would likely be accommodated, and so would not be required to wait until their terminal SSN digit was chosen.

If this or a similar protocol is chosen, it could provide random cohorts for comparison purposes since the terminal digit on the SSN is randomly assigned. While this again provides opportunities, there are also likely to be problems. Such a staged within state rollout may not be continued in the second and third sets of states. Most who ultimately participate may not wait for their scheduled distribution so that those in the random groups are generally biased toward non-participation. Even if all beneficiaries "waited their turn," they may be "contaminated" by expectation of their Ticket eligibility. Alternative comparison group design strategies will solve some of these issues, but will raise other problems.

Because of the opportunities and shortcomings of various options, comparison group selection will need to rely on multiple strategies. The initial development of the comparison group design will build upon the fundamentally distinct, yet complementary groups contained in the Contractor's proposal (see **Section F, Instructions to Offerors**). The Contractor shall consult frequently with SSA's Task Manager during the development process. Based on this consultation, input from the TESG, and information produced from Ticket program implementation activities and the other tasks in this design contract, the Contractor shall develop the comparison group design and make modifications, as necessary. Progress on the sample design development shall be included in the monthly reports to the Task Manager.

5.2.3 <u>The Full Sample Design Report</u>

Based on the Ticket and comparison group designs from tasks 5.2.1 and 5.2.2, the Contractor shall develop an overall sample design that is consistent with the overall objectives of the net outcomes evaluation and the specific requirements proscribed in the TWWIIA legislation. The sample shall be designed to be of sufficient size and stratification to provide nationally representative estimates of Ticket outcomes, while providing for appropriate subgroup characteristic comparisons (e.g., gender, type of disability, age group) among the various groups. The sample shall be designed to detect differences as small as 3 percent at accepted levels of power (.8) and significance (.1). The sample design shall consider sample attrition among the repeated surveys, and the potential bias introduced. The design shall also address issues of mobility among the sample into and out of Ticket eligible areas. The sample design will detail the exact sample strata, the method by which sample cases will be chosen, each step in the sample selection process, and the data sources for all sample cases.

The actual sample cases shall not be drawn at this time. But the sample design shall be sufficiently detailed that drawing sample cases will be easy to implement as the logical next step in the survey process. The Contractor should understand that the sample design being developed here will be used by a different Contractor to draw the sample cases for the full survey. No use of proprietary data sets shall be made in designing the sample. Any data that is used to develop the sampling frame must be accessible to or be made available to the Contractor selected to field the survey. The Contractor will carefully document each step in the process.

The Contractor shall produce a final sample design report detailing the proposed steps in the sample process, and describing the final sample design. The sample design report shall be sufficiently detailed to satisfy the needs of OMB clearance (see Task 7). The final sample design shall be prepared to allow for an easy transition between this design contract and the subsequent contract awarded to implement the evaluation and field the surveys. The final sample design report shall be submitted to SSA's Task Manager as described in Section D below. Full documentation of all activities under this task must be included in the sample design report to such an extent that future offerors can easily proceed with implementation of the sample design.

5.3 Pretest Surveys

After completing the draft surveys and the theoretical development of the sample design (Task 5.2.3), the Contractor shall pretest all of the surveys developed under subtask 5.1. The goal of the pretest is to evaluate the survey instrument, and respondent burden information required for OMB clearance. The pretest will also provide valuable information for estimating the costs of the survey implementation. Upon completion of the pretest, the Contractor shall provide to SSA a report detailing the results of the pretest and indicating ways in which the survey instrument, and survey delivery method may need to be revised prior to seeking OMB clearance and fielding the full survey. These issues will be discussed at TESG meeting #2 (Task 6.2). Full documentation of all activities under this task must be included by the Contractor in the pretest report to such an extent that future offerors can easily proceed with implementation of the survey design.

5.3.1 Selection of the Pretest Sample

The pretest will need to be completed before sufficient information is available to implement the sample design. As a result, the pretest sample will need to be drawn based on simplified criteria. The Contractor shall recommend populations from existing SSA administrative data that will allow for appropriate testing of the survey instruments. By the date indicated in Section D, below. Based on these recommendations, SSA shall provide the Contractor with sample cases on which to conduct the pretest.

5.3.2 Administer the pretests

The primary goal of the pretest is to ensure that all aspects of the survey instruments perform well. Since the pretest will be conducted prior to large-scale implementation of the Ticket program, minor wording modifications to the survey instrument may be required for the pretest instrument. The pretest shall be administered in the Contractor's local area. In other words, long-distance, overnight travel is not permissible for pretest interviewers. OMB guidelines require that not more than nine pretest interviews be administered for a single protocol. Following these guidelines, the Contractor shall pretest five separate protocols, for a total of 45 pretest interviews for each survey (if four surveys are developed, this implies a total of 180 surveys). Under each protocol, it may be useful to interview a different strata of respondents with the same survey instrument to test skip patterns and topic areas that are likely to be followed differently by each type of respondent. Alternatively, two or three different strata of respondents may be interviewed with two or three slightly different versions of the survey instrument to evaluate the performance of several batteries of questions or to test different language versions of the instrument. The method of administering the pretest is to be hardcopy paper and pencil (PAPI). The Government will not fund the development of a computer assisted instrument under this contract. The development of a computer assisted instrument based on the revised (final) questionnaire, if appropriate, will be the responsibility of the implementation contractor selected to field the full survey. Interview times shall be carefully tracked to assist the estimation of collection burden for the OMB clearance package. To the extent that pretest results indicate the need for revision of any or all parts of the survey design, such revisions shall be incorporated as part of the final survey instrument (Task 5.3.4).

The pretest results for each survey shall be reported separately. Pretest results for Spanish and English versions of each survey shall also be provided separately. The Contractor shall deliver letter style reports to the Task Manager summarizing the results of the pretest for each instrument within 15 days of the completion of the last pretest for that instrument (a total of 8 reports). All reports shall be delivered to the SSA Task Manager by the date indicated in Section D, below. Each report shall describe the overall results, any problems that were uncovered and how those problems were resolved.

5.3.3 Summary report on the pretests

After completing all of the pretests, the Contractor shall prepare a summary report on pretest results by the date indicated in Section D, below. This report will provide the overall pretest evaluation of the "draft" versions of the survey instruments. Individual and group statistics shall be presented for each survey and interview protocol, including interview time and demographics of the pretest samples. For each topic area, the Contractor shall describe the general outcome of the pretest and evaluate the performance of the survey instrument. The Contractor shall make recommendations for revisions in the sample design, survey instrument, and sample delivery method, as appropriate.

The Contractor shall revise the summary report on pretest results based on comments from the SSA Task Manager. The final summary on pretest results shall be submitted to SSA's Task Manager as described in Section D below.

5.3.4 Produce Final Survey Instruments

Based on the results of the pretests and consultation with the Task Manager, the Contractor shall produce the final survey instruments. The final survey instruments shall be prepared to allow for an easy transition between this design contract and the subsequent contract awarded to field the full survey. The Contractor shall be prepared to make itself available as a consultant to the implementation (field) Contractor (when awarded) during the start-up phase of the field contract (see Task 9.2). The Contractor shall not develop a computer-assisted programming for the final survey instrument, but shall develop the format and content of paper and pencil version so as to ease the transition to a computer format by the implementation contractor.

The final survey instruments shall be submitted to SSA's Task Manager as described in Section D below.

5.4 Survey Delivery Design

The Contractor shall assist SSA in determining the appropriate survey delivery method or methods for the various surveys. Options will include all CATI (computer aided telephone interview), CATI with cell phone follow-up, all CAPI (computer aided personal interview), and various combinations of these methods. Survey delivery methods may differ among the different surveys, and may differ among the waves of the surveys (e.g., for the outcomes survey). Some or all surveys may include advanced letters.

The Contractor shall determine, in consultation with the Task Manager and the TESG, the timing of the surveys and whether the surveys will have repeated administrations. For surveys with repeated administrations, the Contractor shall determine the number and timing of the follow-up surveys. For, example, the participation, consumer satisfaction and employment services surveys may each have a single field period, while the employment outcomes survey may be administered as a baseline with follow-up after six and eighteen months. The field period and field designs may also vary among the surveys to maximize the quality of responses. The consumer satisfaction survey field design, for example, could target individuals who are engaged in active Ticket services and those who have recently completed such services. Similarly, the field design for the employment services survey could survey beneficiaries shortly after those services have concluded. This might imply a relatively small-scale survey effort over a long period that surveys individuals as they complete their employment services, rather than a large-scale effort of relatively short duration once a sufficient number of participates have completed their employment services. (see **Section F**, below)

Full documentation of all activities under this task must be included in the survey delivery design report (Task 5.4.2) to such an extent that the implementation contractor can easily proceed with implementation of the survey design.

5.4.1 Preliminary Survey Delivery Design

After completion of the survey pretest (Task 5.3.2), the Contractor shall develop a preliminary survey delivery design. The preliminary design shall consider both costs and data quality and strike a reasonable balance between these concerns. A memo outlining the option shall be delivered to the Task Manager by the due date indicated in Section D, below. The memo shall discuss the variables considered in the estimate including the survey delivery methods, the estimated interview length (based on the pretest results), the number of PSUs, the sample sizes and expected response rates. The report will not estimate the cost of the survey implementation, but will provide detailed information on the survey components that will assist SSA in developing such estimates.

5.4.2 Final Survey Delivery Design

After consideration of the preliminary survey delivery design the government will choose a survey delivery design. The Contractor shall then develop and submit a final report on this design to the Task Manager by the date indicated in Section D, below. The report shall include a detailed discussion of the survey delivery methods included and the potential bias associated with each method. The report shall also include for each survey, the estimated interview length (based on the pretest results) and PSUs used in calculations, the sample sizes and expected response rates.

6 Design Report

The Ticket evaluation design contract can be divided into two components. The first component of the contract is the assessment of data and the development of the surveys to support the evaluation. The second component of the contract is the design of the evaluation itself. The first component includes the data file assessment under Task 4 and the survey development under Task 5. Once these data development activities have been completed, the Contractor shall prepare a design report. The design report shall summarize the administrative data assessment, and the survey development to date and shall discuss the refined plans for the impact evaluation given that the data development has been completed.

6.1 Draft Design Report

At least three weeks prior to TESG meeting #2 (Task 6.2), the Contractor shall submit a Draft Design Report to the SSA Task Manager and shall directly mail this report to all members (academic and non-academic experts, and government members) of the TESG. This report will form the basis of discussion for the TESG meeting.

6.2 Technical Evaluation Support Group Meeting #2

The Contractor, in consultation with the SSA Task Manager, shall schedule a one-day TESG meeting at ORES' Washington, DC offices. The Contractor also shall make the necessary travel arrangements for all non-governmental TESG members. The purpose of this meeting will be for the TO Contractor to present their amended evaluation plans and for the members of the TESG to discuss the technical merits of these plans. After the meeting, the Contractor shall write a summary of the meeting, indicating ways in which key suggestions and recommendations shall be incorporated into the evaluation design. The meeting summary shall be sent to the Task Manager by the date indicated in Section D, below.

6.3 Revised Design Report

The Contractor shall revise the Draft Design Report based on the discussion at TESG meeting #2 and input from the SSA Task Manager. This revised report shall be delivered to the SSA Task Manager by the date indicated in Section D, below.

7 Draft OMB clearance package on Surveys

To facilitate the timely implementation of the Ticket surveys, the Contractor shall prepare and submit to SSA a draft OMB clearance package. While SSA retains the ultimate responsibility for obtaining OMB approval, this draft package is intended to assist SSA in that process. Critical components of the draft OMB clearance package for which the Contractor is responsible include;

- the supporting statement,
- detailed questionnaire descriptions,
- consent forms to be signed by all respondents explaining the voluntary nature of the project and the rights of the respondent, and
- copies of the final survey instruments in each language in which it is to be administered.

The supporting statement must include: (1) survey justification -- necessity of information collection, use of information, efforts to reduce the burden of responding, efforts to identify and reduce duplication, assurance of confidentiality, estimates of collection burden, plans for tabulation, statistical analysis, and publication; and (2) statistical methods -- potential respondent universe and sampling method, procedures for collection of information, methods to maximize response rates, and tests of procedures or methods. At the time the OMB package is produced, the sample design will be based on the theoretical development that will not have been tested because the data necessary to do will not yet be available. The OMB package will thus need to include the design Contractor's testing plan to be implemented by the implementation contractor.

The Contractor shall frequently consult with SSA's Task Manager during preparation of the draft OMB clearance package to ensure that all required elements are included. The Contractors final draft of the clearance package shall be delivered to the Task Manager by the date indicated in Section D, below.

8 Evaluation

There will be two components to the overall evaluation design. The first will be an evaluation of the Ticket process covering the activities of SSA, the Program Manager and the employment networks established under the Law. The design Contractor will develop the overall process evaluation and will implement its earliest phases prior to handing it off to the evaluation implementation contractor.

The second component will assess the quantitative and qualitative impacts of the Ticket to Work. This component of the evaluation will have three parts. The first part will evaluate those net outcomes that can be addressed using SSA administrative files and the new Ticket Program Manager and SSA Ticket implementation files for all SSA disabled beneficiaries not living outside of the United States. The second part to the quantitative and qualitative evaluation design will assess the detailed vocational services employment outcomes for those included SSI/SSDI disabled beneficiaries in the employment services and outcome data surveys. The final part of this second evaluation component will assess the qualitative issues of motivation, participation, and consumer satisfaction.

8.1 Process Evaluation

The Contractor shall implement the initial phase of the process evaluation as outlined in this statement of work, and shall develop a comprehensive process evaluation that builds on this initial phase to be implemented by the implementation contractor. The goal of this evaluation is to assess the net cost of the Ticket program, describe the program implementation design and compare it to the actual implementation process, identify problems in the implementation process, identify changes in the process and when they occur, and provide a qualitative understanding of the Tickets program to complement the quantitative evaluation. In support of Task, the Contractor shall prepare an overall process evaluation design. The Contractor shall meet twice with SSA Ticket implementation staff, and shall conduct two rounds of site visits, preparing interview guides in advance of each (see **Section F**, below).

8.1.1 First Round site visits and telephone interviews

The initial assessment of the Ticket program implementation shall take place through a first round SSA meeting with SSA implementation staff in SSA's Baltimore offices, and one two-day site visit to the Ticket Program Manager's facilities. The meeting and site visit shall occur during the fall/winter of 2000. The Contractor should also expect to conduct at least 15 follow-up telephone interviews with an average duration of 20 minutes each. The Contractor's objective during this first round will be to gain a better understanding of the implementation design and startup experiences. The Contractor will also focus on whether adequate plans are in place to collect and store data that are critical to the net outcome evaluation. The Contractor shall consult with the SSA Task Manager and develop a proposed list of attendees to the SSA first round meeting and 3 proposed meeting dates. This meeting proposal is due four weeks prior to the first proposed meeting date. The Task Manager shall consult with the other SSA components and choose one of the Contractor's proposed meeting dates. The Contractor shall further develop an agenda and a set of Ticket implementation questions in advance of the meeting in consultation with the SSA Task Manager. The Contractor shall finalize the agenda and questions one week prior to the SSA meeting and the Task Manager will circulate the documents among anticipated SSA attendees. The agenda and implementation questions shall focus on SSA data, processing, operational, coordination, and timing issues related to the Contractor's evaluation effort.

The Contractor shall submit a summary memo to the Task Manager within 15 days of the first round SSA meeting on process evaluation. This document shall focus on any start-up issues identified and shall include the Contractor's assessment of value and quality of SSA's planned data collection activities.

The PM site visit shall address appropriate process evaluation topics including (but not limited to);

- the scope and clarity of the PM's written implementation plans
- the consistency of the PM's implementation plans and activities with the SSA/PM statement of work
- the consistency of understanding of required PM tasks among the PM's staff
- the adequacy of completed and planned staff training
- problems that have been encountered during the implementation and the steps taken to correct such problems
- the adequacy of communication among PM staff and with the ENs and SSA
- the adequacy of PM labor and capital (especially information technology) resources
- the adequacy of PM recruiting plans for ENs
- implemented and planned data quality assurance activities
- the adequacy of PM database designs and data sharing plans to support the Ticket program evaluation

The Contractor shall develop interview guides for use during the Ticket Program Manager site visit. Each shall be submitted to SSA for comment. These guides shall target different levels of the PM's organization from upper management to front-line employees. The Contractor shall revise the guides in response to SSA comments and shall submit them for final review. The Contractor shall also submit a proposed site visit schedule for review by SSA. The Contractor shall make modifications as appropriate following SSA comment and submit the final site visit schedule to SSA prior to making travel arrangements. Due dates for the interview guide and site visit schedule are indicated in Section D, below.

The Contractor shall submit a second round Ticket Program Manager site visit summary to the Task Manager by the date indicated in Section D, below. This document shall describe the site visit, the interviewing methods (including the interview guides) and shall detail the information obtained. This document shall focus on, but is not limited to, the start-up issues listed above and shall include the Contractor's assessment of value and quality of the Ticket Program Manager data collection activities. The summary shall also include a description of the follow-up telephone interviews conducted in support of the site visit.

The summary report shall be delivered to the SSA Task Manager for comment. Following comments by the Task Manager, the Contractor shall make any additional follow-up calls to the Ticket Program Manager and modifications to the summary report, as necessary. The Contractor shall then submit the revised summary memo by the date indicated in Section D, below.

8.1.2 Second Round site visits and SSA staff interviews

The second round assessment of the Ticket program implementation shall follow the structure of the first round site visits and shall occur in spring/summer of 2001. It will include a second round meeting with SSA implementation staff in SSA's Baltimore offices, and a three-day site visit to the Ticket Program Manager's facilities. In addition, the Contractor shall arrange, in consultation with the Task Manager and the PM, three-day site visits that include at least two ENs in each of the first round states (see **Section F**, below). The Contractor should expect to conduct at least 40 follow-up telephone interviews with an average duration of 20 minutes each.

The Contractor's objective during this second round will be to access the actual startup experiences, identify implementation problems that have been encountered and changes in the implementation design that have occurred as a result of such problems. The Contractor will also focus on whether data that are critical to the net outcome evaluation are being adequately collected and stored. The Contractor shall consult with the SSA Task Manager and develop a proposed list of attendees to the SSA second round meeting and 3 proposed meeting dates. This meeting proposal is due four weeks prior to the first proposed meeting date. The Task Manager shall consult with the other SSA components and choose one of the Contractor's proposed meeting dates. The Contractor shall further develop an agenda and a set of Ticket implementation questions in advance of the meeting in consultation with the SSA Task Manager. The Contractor shall finalize the agenda and questions one week prior to the SSA meeting and the Task Manager will circulate the documents among anticipated SSA attendees. The agenda and implementation questions shall again focus on SSA data, processing, operational, coordination, and timing issues related to the Contractor's evaluation effort. Topics shall also include inquires into early indications of EN and beneficiary participation and any process modifications that have been needed.

The Contractor shall submit a summary memo to the Task Manager within 15 days of the first round SSA meeting on process evaluation. This document shall focus on early implementation issues identified and shall include the Contractor's assessment of value and quality of SSA's planned data collection activities.

The PM site visit shall again address appropriate process evaluation topics including (but not limited to);

- the scope and clarity of the PM's written implementation
- the consistency of the PM's implementation plans and activities with the SSA/PM statement of work
- the consistency of understanding of required PM tasks among the PM's staff
- the adequacy of staff training
- problems that have been encountered during the implementation and the steps taken to correct such problems
- the adequacy of communication among PM staff and with the ENs and SSA
- the adequacy of PM labor and capital (especially information technology) resources
- the adequacy of PM recruiting plans for ENs
- data quality and quality assurance activities
- the adequacy of the PM database and data sharing in support of the Ticket program evaluation

The Contractor shall develop interview guides for use during the Ticket Program Manager site visit. These guides shall target different levels of the PM's organization from upper management to front-line employees. Each shall be submitted to SSA for comment. The Contractor shall revise the guides in response to SSA comments and shall submit them for final review.

The EN site visits shall address appropriate process evaluation topics including (but not limited to);

- the scope and clarity of the EN's description of services offered
- the consistency of services provided with the EN's description of services offered
- the adequacy of communication among EN staff and with the PM
- the range of disabilities served
- the EN catchment area served
- the adequacy of staff training
- the adequacy of service facilities
- problems that have been encountered during the implementation and the steps taken to correct such problems
- the quality of services provided
- EN recruiting of participants
- EN tracking of participants
- EN data quality and quality assurance activities
- the quality of EN data storage and transmission to the PM

The Contractor shall develop EN interview guides for use during the site visits. These guides shall target different levels of the EN's organization from upper management to front-line employees. Each shall be submitted to SSA for comment. The Contractor shall revise the guides in response to SSA comments and shall submit them for final review.

The Contractor shall also submit a proposed site visit schedule for review by SSA. The Contractor shall make modifications as appropriate following SSA comment and submit the final second round site visit schedule to SSA prior to making travel arrangements. Due dates for the interview guide and site visit schedule are indicated in Section D, below.

The Contractor shall submit a second round Ticket Program Manager site visit summary to the Task Manager by the date indicated in Section D, below. This document shall describe the site visits, the interviewing methods (including the interview guides) and shall detail the information obtained. The summary shall focus on EN and PM implementation and data issues, including those listed above. It shall include the updated Contractor's assessment of value and quality of the data collection activities. These summaries shall include a description of the follow-up telephone interviews conducted in support of the site visit. The summary report shall be delivered to the SSA Task Manager for comment. The Contractor shall make any necessary follow-up calls to the Ticket Program Manager and shall modify the summary as necessary following comments by the Task Manager. The Contractor shall then submit the revised summary memo by the date indicated in Section D, below.

8.1.3 Process Evaluation Design

The process evaluation design will integrate the two phases of the process evaluation. The first phase of the process evaluation will be conducted by the design Contractor as outlined in this statement of work (Tasks 8.1.1 and 8.1.2). Based on these Tasks and the experience from the first round of site visits, the Contractor will develop the next phase of the process evaluation to be implemented by the implementation contractor. This proposed "phase 2" design will be developed as an extension of the first phase process evaluation so that the work continued by the implementation contractor complements the work completed by the design Contractor.

Following first round of site visits, the Contractor shall develop a detailed process evaluation draft design for the implementation contractor to execute. This draft design is to be delivered to the Task Manager by the date indicated in Section D, below. It will discuss the schedule and goals of various site visits, the design of the interview guides (e.g., the target groups of discussants and topics to be covered for each), how changes and problems in the implementation process will be documented, and how the process evaluation will complement the quantitative evaluation. The draft design will discuss the activities of the first round of site visits completed by the design Contractor, the expected design Contractor activities of second round, and how the design being proposed appropriately extends these "phase 1" process evaluation activities. Following comment by the Task Manager, the Contractor will submit a final Process Evaluation Design by the date indicated in Section D, below.

8.2 Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluation of the Impact of the Ticket to Work on SSA Beneficiaries

Based on consultation with the Task Manager and the TESG, the Contractor shall develop a detailed draft evaluation analysis plan for assessing the net impact of the Ticket program. The evaluation shall be designed to provide an independent assessment of the effectiveness of the Ticket to Work program. The evaluation will also be designed to give ongoing feedback to policymakers on the effectiveness of the Ticket to Work and provide recommendations for program modifications.

The overarching requirement of the evaluation is that it determine the net impact of the Ticket to Work program relative to what would have occurred in the absence of the program. The estimation of these impacts of the Ticket program shall include (but is not limited to):

- the net cost of the Ticket program to the SSI/SSDI program
- the total Ticket program administrative costs
- the net impact on employment among SSA disabled beneficiaries
- the net impact on earnings among SSA disabled beneficiaries
- the net change in reliance on SSA benefits among SSA beneficiaries

The evaluation shall also assess differences in Ticket programs success across program variables including (but not limited to) geographic, demographic, human capital, vocational service, and disability characteristics.

Beyond this general requirement, the evaluation shall also be design to meet the specific requirements of the TWWIIA legislation (see Section C2 above). This includes assessing the effectiveness of the Ticket to Work on work outcomes for beneficiaries receiving tickets and the cost-effectiveness of the program. It also includes the eleven specific evaluation issues identified in Sec.101.(c)(4)(C)(ii) titled "Specific matters to be address."

This evaluation will be designed to utilize the Contractor's assessment of files from Task 4, including the specific data variables contained in those files, the comparison groups identified in Task 5.2.2, and the data and variables that will be created by the surveys in Task 5.1. It will also include sensitivity analyses that can be used to assist in refining the design once sufficient data on the Ticket to Work program has been attained.

The impact evaluation design shall include three parts. The first shall be designed to examine the impact of the Ticket to Work program using data for all disabled adult SSA beneficiaries not residing in foreign countries. The second part of the evaluation design shall evaluate the Ticket based incorporating the additional survey data collected. It will examine issues such as the decision to participate in the Ticket to Work, the services received and the net-impact of the program using data from Ticket-eligible and non-eligible beneficiaries included in the supplemental participation and quantitative surveys. The final part of the evaluation design shall examine the qualitative aspects of the Ticket to Work program using qualitative data from the supplemental surveys designed under Task 5.1.

8.2.1 Net Outcome Evaluation Design for All SSA Adult Disabled Beneficiaries

This first part of the Quantitative and Qualitative Impact Evaluation Design will be a net outcome evaluation that relies on SSA administrative files and the new Ticket Program Manager and SSA Ticket implementation. The data for this part of the evaluation will be available for all SSA disabled beneficiaries including participants, eligible nonparticipants and those who are not Ticket eligible. Program net outcomes for Ticket participants will therefore be measured against all ineligibles and all non-participants not residing in foreign countries. While such data allows for evaluation for the full SSA US disability population, the evaluation issues will be limited to those contained these existing and Ticket implementation data sources. The Contractor may also propose additional non-SSA, non-Ticket data (e.g., Census data) that are generally available for participants and non-participants.

SSA data provides a reliable source of data on beneficiaries. It is important, however, that the Contractor recognizes the limitations of administrative data and integrates this understanding into their evaluation design from the outset. Data is generally limited to that which necessary to administer the SSI and SSDI program. Such data will include application and award dates, types of disability, benefits amounts and durations. Information on work attitudes, vocational training, human capital, employment and earnings are non-existent or very limited. And, while monthly self-reported earnings after exclusions are available for SSI recipients, they are not available for SSDI. The only independent source of earnings for both populations is the SER, which provides only annual FICA capped earnings (with a lag of about 11 months). Beyond such data limitations, the Contractor must understand of related program rules that are expected to impact the evaluation design.

The Contractor shall develop and refine their design during the data assessment and survey development phase of the project. Progress for this subtask in meeting the evaluation requirements identified in 8.2 and C.2 above shall be included in the monthly progress reports to the Task Manager.

8.2.2 Net Outcome Evaluation Design for Survey Sample

The second part to the evaluation design will be distinct from the full population evaluation, and will focus on the richer set of issues covered by the participation, employment services, and outcome data surveys designed in Task 5.1. This part of the design will be limited to those individuals who participate in these supplementary surveys, but will cover issues not possible in the administrative data part of the evaluation. The evaluation design will include the information obtained from these surveys as well as data available from the SSA administrative and Ticket implementation sources. This part of the evaluation will examine Ticket participation, the types and intensities of vocational supports utilized, and provide a detailed analysis and estimates of the net employment and earnings outcomes. This survey analysis component of the impact evaluation will also analyze individual participant and service characteristics associated with employment success and failure.

The Contractor shall develop and refine their design during the data assessment and survey development phase of the project. Progress for this subtask in meeting the evaluation requirements identified in 8.2 and C.2 above shall be included in the monthly progress reports to the Task Manager.

8.2.3 Qualitative Survey Evaluation Design

The third part to the evaluation will be the evaluation of the qualitative outcomes using consumer satisfaction survey(s) designed under Task 5.1. This part of the evaluation will include only those Ticket eligibles and participants who participate in the consumer satisfaction survey, but will draw on available data from SSA administrative and Ticket implementation sources as appropriate. This part of the evaluation will be designed to identify ways in which the Ticket program could be improved to be more responsive to the needs of SSA's disabled beneficiaries.

The Contractor shall develop and refine their design during the data assessment and survey development phase of the project. Progress for this subtask in meeting the evaluation requirements identified in 8.2 and C.2 above shall be included in the monthly progress reports to the Task Manager.

8.3 Preliminary Report on the Impact Evaluation Design

8.3.1 Preliminary Report Outline

Following the second TESG meeting, the Contractor shall provide the Task Manager with a proposed report outline for the preliminary report. The Contractor shall provide the outline to the Task Manager for comment, and shall make changes as necessary. The final report outline shall be provided to the Task Manager by the date provided in Section D, below.

8.3.2 Preliminary Report on Evaluation Design

Based on the preliminary report outline, the Contractor shall produce a preliminary report. The report will incorporate what has been learned from the TESG members during the second meeting, the data analysis from Task 4, the survey development in Task 5.1, and the comparison group analysis in Task 5.2.2. It will address all three parts of the impact evaluation individually and in concert. The evaluation will also provide feedback to policymakers through periodic reports detailing data collection, findings and recommendations for program modifications. The Contractor shall provide the report to the Task Manager for review, and shall make changes as necessary. The final report outline shall be provided to the Task Manager by the date provided in Section D, below.

8.3.3 Technical Evaluation Support Group Meeting #3

The Contractor, in consultation with the SSA Task Manager, shall schedule a one-day TESG meeting at ORES' Washington, DC offices. The Contractor also shall make the necessary travel arrangements for all non-governmental TESG members. The purpose of this meeting will be for the TO Contractor to present the 8.3.2 Preliminary Report on Evaluation Design and for the members of the TESG to discuss the technical merits of the design. After the meeting, the Contractor shall write a summary of the meeting, indicating ways in which key suggestions and recommendations shall be incorporated into the evaluation design. The meeting summary shall be sent to the Task Manager by the date indicated in Section D, below.

8.3.4 Revised Preliminary Report on Evaluation Design

The Contractor shall revise the Preliminary Report on Evaluation Design based on the discussion at TESG meeting #3 and input from the SSA Task Manager. This revised report shall be delivered to the SSA Task Manager by the date indicated in Section D, below.

9 Technical Assistance to Implementation Contractor

9.1 Brief Implementation Contractor on Surveys and the Evaluation Design and Documentation

The Contractor will provide three full-day briefings for SSA's Task Manager, other SSA/ORES staff, and the implementation contractor on the key elements of the overall design. These briefings shall separately cover:

1. the analysis of SSA administrative files, and the new files associated with the Ticket to Work process under Task 4
2. the supplemental surveys and sample design produced under Task 5
3. the process and impact evaluation designs in Task 8

These briefings are intended to prepare the implementation contractor for implementation of the design by explaining what has been learned and mechanics of the design that has been developed. More specifically, the purpose of the briefings is to provide walk-throughs of the design work, discuss key issues associated with the various elements, and answer implementation questions. Following each briefing the Contractor shall provide the Task Manager with a summary memo identifying any issues that were raised in the briefing the solutions that are proposed. The memo shall be delivered to the Task Manager by the data indicated in Section D, below.

9.2 Provide Technical Assistance (including limited on-site assistance) to the Evaluation Implementation Contractor

The design Contractor is expected to work with, and provide technical assistance to, the implementation contractor selected to implement the evaluation. This technical assistance will bring the implementation contractor up to date on the key activities of the design contract and answer questions as they arise in the overlap phase with the implementation contract. The government expects the design Contractor to provide such consulting services (up to 2 weeks, or 80 hours) on a no-fee basis to the implementation contractor. If the need to provide such consulting services extends beyond 2 weeks (80 hours), the implementation contractor shall compensate the design Contractor at an appropriate rate.

Progress on the technical assistance and collaboration for this subtask shall be included in the monthly progress reports to the Task Manager.

10 Brief the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Advisory Panel on the Evaluation Design

Following each of the scheduled TESG meetings (subtasks 3.2, 6.2, and 8.3.3), the Contractor will provide briefings to the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Advisory Panel on the project findings and the evaluation design. The Contractor shall consult with the Task Manager on the content of these meetings, but the presentation will summarize the main design points presented at the related TESG meeting and the recommendations of the TESG participants. These briefing will be similar in scope to the briefings listed in Task 9, but will be far less detailed, providing a “big picture” perspective. Each briefing will be designed to be two hours in length, but should be organized to allow for a shorter presentation depending on the needs, interests and time constraints of the Advisory Panel. These briefings are intended to inform the Panel of the evolving elements of the evaluation design by explaining the components of the design and how these components relate to the outcomes to be measured.

The SSA Task Manager will be responsible for scheduling the briefings with the Panel in consultation with all parties, but the Contractor shall plan to be available for such briefings on all scheduled meeting dates of the Panel in the four-month period following each TESG meeting. Following each briefing the Contractor shall provide the Task Manager with a summary memo identifying any issues that were raised in the briefing the solutions that are proposed. The memo shall be delivered to the Task Manager by the data indicated in Section D, below.

11 Final Report

11.1 Draft Final Report

The Contractor shall produce a final report. The final report shall document all aspects of the final design including the analysis file design under Task 4, the survey and sample design under Task 5, the results of the initial process evaluation and the design for the continuing process evaluation under the implementation contractor, and the three parts to the impact evaluation design under Task 8. The final report shall also review the technical assistance provided to the implementation contractor under Task 9, discuss any issues that were identified during the collaboration phase, and indicate how these issues were resolved. The Contractor shall provide the report to the Task Manager for review by the date provided in Section D, below.

11.2 Final Report

Following SSA’s review of the final report and receipt of comments from the task manager, the Contractor shall deliver the final version of the Final Report. The Contractor shall make all necessary changes indicated in through the Task Manager’s comments and shall deliver the report by the date provided in Section D, below.

NOTE: At the conclusion of the contract, the TO Contractor shall return to SSA all data files received from SSA and shall provide SSA with copies of all analytic data files and relevant processing data files created for the performance of this contract. All data files connected with the performance of this contract that are not delivered to SSA shall be destroyed by the Contractor at the conclusion of this contract.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

1. Proposed SSA Ticket Data Dictionary -- ***electronic attachment (Microsoft Excel)***.
2. Overview of SSA Administrative Data -- ***electronic attachment (Microsoft Word).***
3. State Partnership Initiatives Data Collection Instrument - ***electronic attachment (Microsoft Word).***
4. Requirements of the MPR administrative analysis file development contract -- ***electronic attachment (Microsoft Word).***
5. RAND SSA Program Data User's Manual (SSA MBR, SSR, 831, NUMEDENT and SER – "see MEF data elements from the summary segment") -- ***electronic attachment (Microsoft Word)***.
6. Project Network Baseline and Follow-up Surveys -- ***not available in electronic format; to be sent via mail.***
7. Fu Associates Reports -- ***not available in electronic format; to be sent via mail.***
   a) Development of the Project NetWork SSI Benefits Analysis File
   b) Development of the Project NetWork SSDI Benefits Analysis File